

A
L E T T E R
T O

DOCTOR PRIESTLEY;

OCCASIONED

By his late P A M P H L E T,

ADDRESSED TO THE

Rev. Mr. S. BA D C O C K.

Nisi tu fallere alios potius quam docere voluisses, ea addere quæ cum verbis à te productis necessario cohærent, adeoque integrum Textum Lectori tuo exhibere debuisses. Sed Crimen hoc, in Caput tuum recidit.

BULL DE ZWICKER.

E X E T E R :

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LETTER

TO

DOCTOR

OF THE

BY

AND

Rev. Mr. B. A. D. C. C. W.

It is with much pleasure that I have been
able to contribute a small portion of my
time and labor to the cause of the
free and independent press of the
United States.

Yours truly,
B. A. D. C. C. W.

L E T T E R

T O

DOCTOR PRIESTLEY.

REVEREND SIR,

I AM not at all surprized, that the Monthly Reviewer should have neglected to take any notice of your last performance. The great impropriety of answering to names in a journal, which owes much of its credit to the veil which is thrown over the persons who conduct it, must be obvious to every one of the least reflection. To be at the call of a petulant and mortified Author, who might think himself robbed of his just right, only because he had not been loaded with the applause his vanity might have flattered him with the expectation of, would inevitably destroy the freedom of criticism, and make the business of a Reviewer more tedious and disgusting than the dullness of some writers and the self-sufficiency of

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others

others have hitherto made it. Its common drudgery must, I suppose, be submitted to, like one of those necessary evils, which can neither be avoided nor corrected. But a Reviewer would act a very absurd part, if he should needlessly increase the burdens of office, without gaining any advantage in return.

The *name* of an Author is of little consequence to the public; and to his argument it is of no consequence at all. Its obscurity will not lessen the force of his reasoning, in the estimation of a judicious and unprejudiced reader: And were it as splendid as your own, it would give no weight to what is frivolous, and no authority to what is false.

Names, however, have great influence with readers of another description; and you, who have written so copiously on the *association of ideas*, know the use of the doctrine perfectly well, and can apply it to your own purpose with a dexterity which does great credit to your art and skill in manœuvring a controversy. The great difficulty lies, in doing all this with an appearance of christian meekness and simplicity; and in throwing the serpent into the back ground of the piece, while all the dove is brought forward in full relief. *Ars est celare artem*: And it is the utmost point of art to keep up this "covert and convenient *seeming*;" for simplicity, in trying too
much

much to look like herself, looks so much like something else, that we are ready to suspect that the serpent hath only been guilty of one of his old tricks, and hath stolen a foreign shape in order to play his game with more success.

I had conceived an idea of expostulating with you very seriously, for the freedom you have taken with a name, which you had no right to mention only on the credit of report. But the intention was abandoned almost as soon as it was formed. "Let the world, said I, be deceived by the simplicity of others, it shall not raise a laugh out of mine; for of what use would expostulation be, with a man who is *a law to himself*:—who, in his zeal against established principles and established forms, spares not the civilities of common life, and treats decorum with as little respect as he treats orthodoxy?

You have called on the person, whom you suppose to have been your antagonist in the Review, to defend himself. *Defend himself*? I see nothing that stands in need of defence; and who ever the Reviewer may be, he may rest very quietly on his arms till something more serious and threatening alarms him; and were I the Reviewer, not even the sound of your name, though like the name of "*Gad*," it always seems to announce that "*a troop cometh*"—yet not even the sound of *your* name, repeated as often

as often as you have repeated your supposed Critic's, would awaken any exertion or excite any alarm in my breast.

If the Review be silent, yet I will take the liberty of offering to you my free sentiments on the subject of your last pamphlet; and will honestly tell you, how far I agree with your Critic, and how far I agree with you.

To begin with the latter, because it may be disposed of in a few words; and then, I think, the way will be perfectly clear and open without a single obstruction.

I am of opinion that the phrase *ἄλλοι δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι τρόποι* is more accurately rendered by you than by the Reviewer. It undoubtedly means, *some in one way, and others in another*. Your Criticiser (as you merrily call him) need not scruple to make this concession, because it will not in the slightest degree interfere with the general inference which he draws from the passage in dispute. Make then the most of your victory; the triumph is so slender, that it would be ungenerous to attempt to rob you of it.

Let us now attend to something not merely verbal.—I profess myself to be one of those who were, from the beginning, most thoroughly dissatisfied with your omission of an essential member of the contested passage in Justin; and I am now equally dissatisfied with the reasons which you have

have contrived to urge, in order to apologize for the omission. You are best acquainted with your own motives : but taking the matter according to its simple and naked appearance, there is a disingenuous design strongly marked on the very face of it. I pretend to look no farther : what is beyond it, is the *secret thing* which belongs solely to conscience ; and if you can acquit yourself to that judge, it will be of little moment who suspects or who condemns you.

I will, however, vindicate the Reviewer in the charge which he brought against you. It was a charge of *mutilation* ; and the charge was supported by an appeal to fact. Now as you gravely inform us, that “ we have have no *angels* either to write books or to review them,”* I will justify the Reviewer, by considering him as acting the part of a mere mortal Critic, who did not pretend to supernatural intelligence, and was barely guided by *the outward and visible sign*.

I will briefly state what I conceive to be the true point in dispute between you and the Reviewer, so far as the passage in Justin is concerned. It will be necessary to recur to your own representation of it, in your *letters* to the learned Archdeacon [p. 32, 33.]. There are two passages in this writer [Justin], in which he speaks of heretics with great indignation, as not Christians, but

* Reply to the Monthly Review.—*Vid. pref. p. vii.*

but as persons whose tenets were absurd, impious and blasphemous, with whom Christians held no communion: but in both the passages, he evidently had in view the *Gnostics only*, denominated from the name of their teachers. He particularly mentions the Marcionites, the Valentinians, the Basilidians, and the Saturninians. He says, "*they blasphemed the maker of the universe and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:*" and that they denied the resurrection, and maintained that after death the soul went immediately to heaven. "Do not," says he, "suppose these to be Christians." Had he considered the Unitarians, with whom he appears to be well acquainted, as heretics, would he not have mentioned or alluded to their tenets also in those passages?"

To this representation, the Reviewer replied to the following effect:

If Dr. Priestley had translated the *whole* passage which he pretended to quote, and had not so far mutilated it as absolutely to hide its true meaning from the eyes of an English reader, it might have been seen, that though the *names* of the Ebionites were not expressly mentioned, yet, at least, that *their tenets were alluded to*. The Reviewer produced the passage at large, and gave a literal translation of it. When the *whole* was fairly brought forward, it appeared that by the
God

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the antient Father expressly meant our blessed Saviour; tho' no one, unacquainted with the original, could possibly have surmized, from Dr. Priestley's translation, that any distinction of persons was intended by the different form of expression; but would naturally have concluded, that *the maker of the universe*, and *the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* was the same Being; especially when it was considered, that the passage was produced purposely with a view to prove, that Justin did not consider those people as heretics, who denied the pre-existence and divinity of Christ. Every common reader (and Dr. Priestley hath honestly confessed that he writes chiefly for the *unlearned*) would naturally have inferred, that the persons whom Justin brands with the appellation of blasphemers were some atheistical or heretical speculatists, who in some way or other asserted principles that were inconsistent with the acknowledged attributes of the supreme Being, and subversive of his providential government of the world in general, or his divine government of the Jewish nation in particular. No common reader would have suspected, that the errors so sharply condemned by the venerable Father, expressly militated against the pre-existent dignity and character of our blessed Saviour. And yet, when the passage was fairly produced, it appeared, that persons
of

of both descriptions—blasphemers of the God of the world, and blasphemers of Christ, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—were equally included in the censure, and ranked in the same catalogue of heretics.

This I conceive to be the precise point in dispute between you and the Reviewer. I have not wilfully omitted any circumstance that deserved to be noticed: but in order to give the reader a clear idea of the difference between you at one view, I will contrast in opposite columns your representation of the passage in Justin, with the passage itself; by which it will, I think, very clearly be perceived, that the difference not only lies between you and your Critic, but between you and the antient Father also.

Dr. Priestley's Account of Justin's State of the Heretics.

“ It hath been sufficiently observed, with what respect Justin Martyr treats the antient Unitarians, evidently shewing, that in his time his own doctrines stood in need of an apology. There are two passages in this writer, in which he speaks of Heretics with great indignation, as not Christians, but as persons whose tenets were absurd, impious and blasphemous, with whom Christians held no communion; but in both passages he evidently had a

Justin's own Account of the Principles of the Heretics.

“ There are, indeed, many who make a profession of Christianity, who avow atheistical and blasphemous tenets, and act according to the influence of such doctrines. Amongst us they are denominated by the names of those from whom they derived their respective principles. Some therefore in one way, and others in another, teach their own peculiar method of blaspheming the Maker of all things and CHRIST, who was to come from him as foretold

view to the Gnostics only, denominated from the name of their teachers. He particularly mentions the Marcionites, the Valentinians, the Basilideans and the Saturninians. He says, *they blasphemed the Maker of the world and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*: that they denied the resurrection, and maintained that after death the soul went immediately to heaven."

* Lett. to Dr. Horsley, p. 31.

foretold in prophecy; and who was THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB. With persons of this description we hold no communion; convinced that they are atheistical, impious, unjust and licentious; and who, instead of WORSHIPPING CHRIST, only confess him by name. They call themselves Christians with just the same propriety as the heathens inscribe the name of God on works constructed by human skill; and mix in impious and impure rites. Some of these are called Marcionites, some Valentinians, some Basilideans, some Saturnilians: and there are also others who are distinguished by other names according to the different denominations of their respective leaders."

* Just. Dial. p. 208. Edit. Tbyrl.

As I am satisfied that the Reviewer acted perfectly right in exposing your representation of this remarkable passage; so I am dissatisfied with the account you are pleased to give of your own conduct in this suspicious affair: and no wonder, for your account of it is so inconsistent and contradictory, that you do not appear to be satisfied with it yourself. You first inform us that you might have shortened the passage, for the sake of saving yourself the trouble of transcribing a long

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quotation

quotation in Greek. But lo! when your pamphlet was printed off and (according to custom) *the catalogue of your works at the end*, a friend of your's chanced to communicate to you an astonishing discovery which he had just made—a discovery which would have softened the tone of any voice but your's; but you are a *privileged* man; and though allowed to redouble your thunder on the devoted head of the Reviewer, you may with impunity neglect to take any shame to yourself for the heedlessness of your own. It was, it seems, discovered by your friend, that the whole passage, in Justin's own Greek, was actually printed in the margin of your book! “Where then—you will ask—where was the mutilation so loudly complained of?”—*Where*, Dr. Priestley?—Why, there, where the Reviewer said it was—in *the* TRANSLATION. Very few that are accustomed to read your theological writings are qualified to read Greek; and fewer still will give themselves the trouble of comparison. Your attempting to avail yourself of a circumstance that appears to have been accidentally brought before you (and of which you had conceived no idea, when you made the first effort at apology), only perplexes the subject still more, and throws a deeper shade on the brow of suspicion. You must know, that all the fault complained of was confined to your representation

sentation of the passage to the view of the *English* reader; and this was more than insinuated, when it was asked you—"how you could for a moment forget that you was addressing yourself to Dr. Horsley?" In short, the whole of the Reviewer's remonstrance seems to have conveyed the following idea—*The salvo of your marginal Greek cannot atone for an essential defect in the translation, which, tho' it might not escape the eye of a learned Critic, would certainly elude even the suspicion of a common reader.*

As the first reason you deemed convenient to offer as an excuse for this glaring defect, was by your own confession, as well as in fact, totally groundless, and only assumed for the moment, because a better did not happen to present itself, I should be glad to see what plea you would urge next. The passage was, it seems, shortened for the sake of saving you some trouble. It was not, however, the trouble of transcribing *Greek*. It must then have been the trouble of writing *English*.—A most curious reason indeed!—especially from a man who never yet appeared to have been either sparing of his own pains or his Reader's patience!

But if it was necessary, for the sake of *brevity*, that a passage of three lines should be condensed into two, was it fair to patch up together two distinct clauses, so as to give them the appearance of a reference to one and the same object? If the

passage was at all events to be abridged, was it at all events to be misrepresented likewise? Now, if you had joined the second clause with the first, as was most natural, we should have had (I will not say the *full* sense of the *whole*, but) the *true* sense of it *as far as it went*. But you seemed anxious to keep our *blessed Saviour* totally out of sight, and therefore stepped over the middle clause entirely: by this artifice you connected the first member of the sentence so dexterously with the last, as to destroy all appearance of distinction, where an express distinction was originally made, and was particularly intended to be noticed by the antient writer. In short, you have not suffered the most distant hint to escape your pen, that *Jesus Christ* had the slightest connection with the blasphemy of the heretics; but rather left your readers to infer the contrary.

In your last publication you attempt to evade both the charge and the reasoning of the Reviewer, by saying that Justin thought *only* of the Gnostics, in this censure on the Heretics of his day. How are you certain of that? Doth not Justin expressly declare, that there were also *other* Heretics who were distinguished by *other* names, besides those more popular ones which he had just mentioned? Now will you take upon you to assert, that the Ebionites were not included among the *αλλοι αἱρετικοὶ*, especially when it is considered

considered, that their tenets were as opposite to his, as the tenets of the Gnostics—perhaps *more* opposite, in some of their leading and characteristic dogmas.

But Justin's own opinion, you tell us, is nothing at all to the point in dispute. Indeed!—Then I do not see what good purpose the bringing it forward was designed to answer; though I am aware of the *distinction* that you are disposed to make, between Justin's private opinion and the public faith and practice of the Church. The distinction, however, will not serve you; for Justin doth not deliver his own private opinion in this passage, but speaks of what was generally acknowledged and followed by Christians: and the censure which he passes on the Heretics included the Ebionites as well as the Gnostics:—it included *all* who, *in one sort or another*, blasphemed “the Christ who was foretold as he that should come from God, and who was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Thus Christ was blasphemed in *various* ways by *opposite parties*; and particularly by the Ebionites, who positively denied either that he was the God of the Patriarchs, or even the representative of him under the old Testament. Now, I ask you, *how* Christ could be blasphemed under the characters expressly attributed to him, but by the denial or the degradation of those characters? Suppose, for instance,
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a man had told Justin that he did not believe that Jesus was *the Messiah foretold by the Prophets*, would not the venerable Father have censured him for blasphemy? And if another had said—“I do not believe that *Christ was the God of Abraham, &c.*” can it possibly be imagined that he would have escaped the same censure? The *very same reason* that leads us to suppose that Justin would have pronounced the one to have been the blasphemer of Christ, leads us also to conclude that he would have bestowed the same title on the other.

I will ask you one question more. Did the Ebionites *worship* Christ?—You will make no scruple of saying, they did not; for in your view the worship of Christ was one of the most flagrant corruptions of Christianity, against which your pure and primitive *Unitarians* bore their open testimony, and like their modern followers called the worship of Jesus Christ the grossest idolatry. And yet Justin only considered those as *nominal* Christians, who denied this honour to our blessed Saviour; and it is persons of this description too, who are included in the catalogue of errors and Heretics, in which you assert, that neither the *Ebionites* nor their *tenets* are alluded to.

If the opinion of the excellent and venerable Martyr had been faithfully represented by you, it would have needed very little sagacity to have perceived

perceived its utter incongruity with your hypothesis. It would have been seen, that Dr. Priestley, with a temerity rarely to be paralleled, had appealed to a passage in Justin, to vouch for the *Innocence and Catholicism* of a doctrine, which that very Father, and in the same passage too, positively declares to be *blasphemy* against Christ.—If this be *consistent*, what is it that can justly merit the contrary epithet?

Your observations on the Creed of Tertullian are, if possible, more fallacious than your reasonings on the passage in Justin. You shift your ground so suddenly, (I commend your generalship) that it is difficult in most cases, and in some impossible to discover the *raison d'être*, in order to attack you.

In one of your letters to Dr. Horsley you assert, “that Tertullian did not consider the Unitarians as excluded from the name and assembly of Christians:” and “this” you say, “is evident from what he says of the Apostles Creed; the several articles of which, as it stood in his time, he recites; asserting, that it was the only proper standard of faith, and that the Church admitted of a variety of opinions in other respects.”

The Reviewer understood this position of your's in its plain and obvious sense; and I believe he understood it in the same sense, in which

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it was understood by every other person, who was not aware of nice and curious distinctions that might be set up hereafter in case of *extremity*.

“*Tertullian* did not consider Unitarians as excluded from the name and assembly of Christians.” This, Sir, was your general assertion; and you founded it on the Creed which he mentions in the Introduction to his Tract *de velandis Virginibus*, in which there is no specific acknowledgment of the Divinity of Christ.

Here, as in the case of Justin, your argument at the best is only of the *negative* kind. But the Reviewer, in order to confront you with *positive* evidence, produced a Creed from the same writer, called, equally with the former, THE RULE OF FAITH; in which the doctrine so obnoxious to you, and your elder brethren of the house of Ebion, is expressly asserted to be an essential article; and the contrary (so strenuously maintained by you and your predecessors) is declared to be false and heretical. In short, the Divinity and pre-existence of Christ, the WORD OF GOD, is said to be a doubt among none but Heretics.† As the fact is not denied by you, it is curious to see how you surmount the difficulty which arises from it. This you attempt to effect, by making

† *Hæc REGULA nullas habet Quæstiones APUD NOS, nisi quas heræses inferunt et quæ Hæreticos faciunt.*

Tert. de Præscript. Cap. XIII.

a *distinction*. Tertullian, it seems, must be divided into two persons. And what then? Why, in one person he represents the *Church*: in the other he is nothing more than Tertullian himself. In the former, he delivered the opinion of others; in the latter, his own. The former declared what was a general rule; the latter, only a private one.

This, if I comprehend your meaning (for I begin to suspect whether in your mouth two and two make four), is the true state of the case between the *nominal* and the *real* Tertullian; between him who modestly spoke in the name of the Church, and him who had the assurance to speak in his own.

But you, Dr. Priestley, who assert with such undaunted confidence, should at least have the semblance of evidence. Now I call on you to produce me one proof, on which to found the distinction which you have presumed to make. By what mark do you distinguish the *regula fidei* that is general, from the *regula fidei* which is particular? Doth Tertullian himself (and it is *he* that you appeal to) give any hint of a difference? Doth he appear to be even conscious of any? No: so far from it, that he declares that the *rule of faith*, in which the Divinity of Christ was admitted, was *unquestionable*, and had been the uninterrupted opinion of the Church *from the beginning*.

*beginning.** What right, therefore, had you to assert, that the one was taught to the Catechumens, and the other the private and unauthorized speculation of an individual? Produce your authority for this assertion. Translate the Creed you dwell on (as all the Socinians have done from time to time) with so much exultation, not in a detached light, but in connection with the preceding part of the discourse from whence it is extracted. Produce it, I say, in its proper *connection*, and then let your readers judge how far you can quote *Tertullian* as an authority.

Your argument, to be just, must be perfect in all its parts; and an essential defect must destroy its whole credit. If the Creed you have produced be a complete epitome of Christian faith, so that it needed no addition, no explanation—I ask, how it can be accounted for, that the article respecting the Holy Ghost (to say nothing of other mutilations of the Apostle's Creed) should have been omitted? Can it be supposed that the Holy Ghost (in whatever light considered), that was admitted into the form of baptism prescribed by our blessed Lord, and into the benedictions and salutations of the Apostles, should have been omitted

* See the *same* doctrine asserted on the *same* Catholic grounds by Irenæus before Tertullin; and by Origen after him. *Iren. Adv. Hær.* lib. III. c. 4. lib. I. c. 2. *Origen.* πρὸς ἀρχαίαν in Proëm.

omitted in a *regula fidei* that was universally prescribed to Catechumens in the age of Tertullian—an age, in which you yourself allow that the doctrine now called Orthodox made a very conspicuous figure? You will, perhaps, tell me, that the Creed was shortened. Then it was not complete. And if it was incomplete in one respect, why might it not be so in another? And how shall the deficiency be supplied, but by recurring to what is more full? How shall what is equivocal be explained, but by having recourse to what is more explicit? This is a rule invariably observed in all cases of doubt and ambiguity; and a writer who would avail himself of the testimony of Tertullian, would rather appeal to what is particular and decisive, than to what is indecisive and general; unless he had some partial and suspicious end to answer.

Writers confessedly orthodox, and writing too in times when the Church was, according to your own account, become settled in orthodoxy, yet frequently quote a part for the whole; or make a slight and general reference to doctrines which had been reduced to a particular standard, and been defined by the most explicit terms. A remarkable instance of this we meet with in the *Catecheses Mystagogicæ* of Cyril of Jerusalem, who flourished above 160 years after Tertullian, and a very considerable time after the establishment of

the Nicene Creed ; and yet proposes the following general article, as a symbol of faith for the *Catechumens* of that period.* “ I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, and in the baptism of repentance.” Now might you not with equal propriety have quoted *this* Creed as well as that of Tertullian, to prove that the *Unitarians*, in the age of Cyril, “ were not excluded from the name and the assembly of Christians,” because it contained no article but what the strictest Unitarian, even an Ebionite of the *elder* branch of the family, might have subscribed? And what reply could have been made to this assertion—except such as the Reviewer made use of, to shew the inconclusiveness of your appeal to the Creed of Tertullian?—The less must have been examined by the greater ; and the want of a precise and definite meaning in the one, must have been supplied by the clearer and fuller evidence of the other.

I repeat my assertion. Cyril is as good a voucher for the *catholicism* of your doctrine in the middle of the fourth century, as Tertullian at the conclusion of the second ; and if your hypothesis is confirmed by the Creed of the latter it is still more established by the Creed of the former.

I have thrown out a new hint for your improvement ; and I expect you will make a due acknowledgment

* Catech. Mytag. I. v. 6.

acknowledgment of the obligation, according to the use you make of it and the advantage you gain by it.

I therefore quit the good *Bishop of Jerusalem*, and leave him with you to be managed, as your cause may require, or your skill may direct. But the *fierce African* disdains to be either at your disposal or mine.

Let us then return to the Creed you have quoted, and fairly examine it on the footing of your own hypothesis ; and, to be as fair as possible, I will admit your own translation of it.

“ The rule of faith is only one, admitting of no
 “ change or emendation, requiring us to believe
 “ in one God Almighty, the Maker of the world:
 “ and in his Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin
 “ Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised
 “ from the dead on the third day, received up
 “ into Heaven, now sitting at the right hand of
 “ the Father, and who will come again to judge
 “ the living and the dead, even by the Resurrec-
 “ tion of the flesh. This law of faith remaining,
 “ other things, being matters of discipline and
 “ conduct, admit of new corrections, the grace
 “ of God co-operating.”

It will be necessary to settle a few preliminary points before the principal question is brought to an issue.

Will

Will you really admit, that this Creed contains the pure faith of the primitive Church? Is every article enumerated in it, perfectly consistent with the genuine and apostolic standard? Is any part of it superfluous or unessential? Might any part of it have been admitted or rejected at the pleasure of an individual? And in case of an open disavowal of any particular article, would an individual have yet maintained his place in the Church, and been ranked among the Catholic members? Now if there be any article in it that may be classed among those indifferent things that a man might have avowed or denied, according to his own particular fancy, how came it to be admitted into so short a symbol? *When* may it be conjectured that it gained admittance; and what was the *reason* and *ground* of its being inserted among primary articles, supposing it to be either false or frivolous?

I ask you, Sir, those plain, and I think necessary questions only, as introductory to one more—and that one goes directly to the fundamental principle of your hypothesis. Doth not this very Creed exclude, by an express declaration of the miraculous conception, the general body of the Ebionites from Catholic communion?—You yourself will allow, that in the time of Tertullian, the Ebionites universally rejected this article; and their rejection of it forms the leading
accusation

accusation against their principles, in the writings of that Father, as well as in those of Irenæus. *Who* then were those "primitive Unitarians, that were not considered as Heretics?" *Who* were the persons whom it is "evident to you that Tertullian did not consider as excluded from the name and the assemblies of Christians?" A more orthodox Socinian than Dr. Priestley would take refuge in the Synagogue of the Nazarenes; but you, Sir, have effectually excluded yourself from any shelter or protection in that quarter, by *breaking down the wall of separation* that divided it from the Conventicle of Ebion. "It hath been, (say you in your second letter to Dr. Horsley) imagined by some, there was a difference between the doctrine of the Ebionites and that of the Nazarenes concerning the person of Christ; the former disbelieving the miraculous conception, and the latter maintaining it: WHEREAS, *I have said*, that I can find no sufficient authority for that difference."

I will then admit the truth and authority of the Creed you have produced: and without going into any comparison of it with one more full and explicit, I will leave it to *itself*, to overthrow the *chief corner-stone* of your *History of the Corruptions*.

There are some passages in Tertullian that you ought to have well considered, before you had written the following note in your third letter to

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Dr.

Dr. Horsley. [Page 27, marg.] "Tertullian, in his Treatise de Præscriptione Hereticorum, makes but slight mention of the Heresy of the Ebionites; and when he gives it that appellation, he makes it to consist in "the observance and defence of circumcision and the law:" and yet he represents Hebion as comprized under the description of Antichrist by St. John."

What do you mean by a "*slight* mention?" You said the same of Irenæus's account of them. But the *slight* mention was proved by the Reviewer to be a very *severe* one; nor is that of Tertullian's less expressive of the abhorrence in which he held them and their tenets.

You have not produced the passage you refer to in the Treatise de Præscriptione. I will, however, supply the defect by producing it myself. § "At in Epistolâ eos maximè Antichristos vocat, qui Christum negarent in Carne venisse, et qui non putarent Jesum esse Filium Dei: Illud Marcion; hoc Hebion vindicavit." i. e. "*In this Epistle St. John chiefly calls those, Antichrists, who denied that Christ was come in the flesh; and those also who did not believe him to be the Son of God. The former was the error of Marcion; the latter of HEBION.*" Could any accusation have been more severe? Could any title be more odious, than that of Antichrist? Could any He-
resy

§ Tertul. Præscript. c. XXXIII.

resy be deemed more atrocious, than that which denied Christ to be *the Son of God*? And did it not necessarily exclude them from a Church, whose most general and simple Creed made this doctrine an essential article?

A person unacquainted with the writings of Tertullian, would naturally have inferred from your note, that the only offence which he took at Hebion was his *observance of the Jewish Law*; that his Heresy received its sole distinction from this circumstance, and that, putting aside this, his other opinions were very tolerable, because very slight, and easily to be accommodated to the general Creed of the Catholic Church. I will assure you, that I should have drawn this conclusion from the representation you have given, if I had not known something of Tertullian—and something too of Dr. Priestley.

Tertullian's account of Hebion is not confined to this passage. He brings the same charge against their principles in other parts of his writings; particularly in his Book *De Carne Christi*, cap. XIV. XVIII.

I am not enquiring into the force and propriety of the arguments made use of by Irenæus and Tertullian. Their *logic* is not the point in dispute. It is their *testimony* that I appeal to; and if ever evidence was full, clear, and decisive against any writer in a matter of fact, that

falls within the compass of history, it is full, clear, and decisive against you in the instance which you have referred to in Tertullian; and I am sometimes surprized, that common discretion has not taught you to be more guarded in assertions so open to confutation.—But sophistry is doomed to be entangled in its own snares; and (to refer to the motto prefixed to your last publication) *be only that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.*

The passage you referred to in Jerom hath turned out so unfortunately for the purpose it was designed to answer, that I am not at all surprized that you should have thrown it into the shade. You know, “there *is* a time to speak and a time to keep silence;” but the difficulty lies in knowing *when*.—However, it will be but doing a piece of common justice to the Reviewer to observe—that out of the variety of remarks which he made on your *Reply* and your friend’s *Vindication*, you almost wholly confined your *rejoinder* to a translation (as you called it!) of this contested passage, and a few *critical* observations on the meaning of *quid*. The Reviewer rejoined to *your* criticisms in his turn. Here the matter rested; and as you pass it over so slightly in your last pamphlet, I am inclined to think that you would readily consent never more to disturb the ashes of what, if it rises, must rise in judgment against you.

But

But though the passage proved in the event very inauspicious to your argument, and your observations on it did not encrease the credit of your learning, yet it served to display the *curious felicity* of your wit:—and here you took your readers—both friends and foes—by *surprise*.

The very essence of wit consists in an unexpected *association of dissimilar ideas*. Could a better illustration be given of it than you have afforded? “*This*, the Reviewer says, after Bishop Bull, *is THE clearest TESTIMONY for a difference between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes. TESTIMONIUM APERTISSIMUM,—It is indeed apertissimum: a testimony—exceedingly open to refutation!*”

To carry on your joke, How *exceedingly open* must the path of wit and humour be, where a *pun* so slipperily walks in to pluck wisdom by the beard! and ———

———*in Crepidas Graiorum ludere gestit!*

On a review of the dispute between you and your Critic, I see nothing of the least consequence that he is called on by honour or truth to retract or palliate. You have not rendered a Defence necessary. You have not even obliged him to seek the cover of apology. His accusations are before the public; so is your Vindication: and were I the Reviewer, I should be sincerely desirous that all who have read the former might read the latter also. He need not shrink from the

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the most rigid scrutiny; but with "*much tranquillity* (to use your own words)—*a tranquillity more approaching to a pleasing alacrity than to any uneasy apprehension,*" he might "*wait the issue of the Controversy,*" if the learned and impartial were to be his Judges.

By your own honest confession "*the majority of the learned are against you.*" Now, as the subject in dispute between you and the Reviewer is of a *learned* nature, one might imagine that numbers would carry some weight in the scale, and that a man of modesty would in some measure repress his confidence, and abate something of the decision of an oracle, when he finds the *πληθὺς* (each of whom, perhaps, as good a judge as himself) of the contrary opinion.

Remember, Sir, that you are not, at least *at present*, ranging in the trackless wilderness of metaphysical speculation; you are not *now* pursuing the meteor of fancy in "*the high priori road.*" No. You and your Critic are both got on plain ground, marked out by direct paths, and circumscribed by distinct boundaries. Here, Sir, imagination is an intruder, and he who, instead of collecting plain facts, amuses himself with arbitrary inferences, may possibly delude the ignorant, but he can never satisfy the judicious.

A man of a shrewd and fertile fancy, smitten with the love of paradox, may draw up *canons of historical*

historical criticism which may well enough agree with the particular branches of a darling hypothesis; and *canons* equally specious and plausible may be so framed, as to suit an hypothesis in every view opposite to it. But there is one canon which an *historian* should never lose sight of. It should be the great, directing principle of all his enquiries into history; and that is, the canon which arises out of the concurrent records of the *times, persons, and facts*, that are the immediate subjects of examination; and not out of random, unmeaning, equivocal—or, as you call them, “*incidental circumstances*.” At least, he should be careful not to have the universal current of clear, explicit and positive evidence run full against him. If it should, though his confidence may bravade it, yet all his sophistry cannot turn the stream.

However you may have already proceeded, and whatever you may already have achieved, we are, it seems, to give you credit for performances still more wonderful to be accomplished hereafter. For you have not yet put forth all your strength. You have a *corps de reserve* and “*new evidence*” to bring forward from the storehouse of antiquity to the terror of orthodoxy.

This *new evidence* is to be produced in a work you are preparing for the press, under the title of “*A View of the Doctrine of the first Ages of the Christian Church concerning the Person of Christ*.”

As

As this work will, I presume, contain "*the MAXIMUM of your Improvements*," I shall wait for it under the full expectation of seeing all your forces brought into the field.

There is indeed, Sir, a great deal yet for you to accomplish, before you are entitled even to the inferior honours of an *Ovation*. The higher triumph is at a greater distance still:—though already the stately victim is leading forth, and even now the garland decks his brows in the imagination of some persons—who yet, very inconsistently with such expectations, are proud of being distinguished as men of *little faith*; and who would rather be known by their *doubting*, than by their *believing all things*.

But to return to the "*MAXIMUM*" of your enquiries and improvements!—When this great work is published I hope we shall see in it some satisfactory answer to the *Queries* proposed to you in the Review, relating to the *miraculous Conception*;—a subject you have hitherto been more than ordinarily scrupulous of deciding on, though strongly and repeatedly urged to be explicit. I will press it on you once more, and leave you without excuse if you persevere in this suspicious silence. A man who is so fond on all occasions of appealing to his sincerity, should have nothing to disguise; and he who hath so long and so loudly called on others for open and unequivocal declaration,

declaration, should himself be superior to dark and ambiguous hints which only tremble on the edge of a *meaning*, but may be withdrawn when occasion requires it.

Your "*new evidence*" seems to inspire you with new confidence; but if we may judge of the future by the past, the triumph you anticipate is premature, and your laurels will wither before they are worn.

Hitherto your *evidence* (as you presume to call the original and ruling principle of your history) is too old to excite admiration, and too common to engage respect. At best it hath been only a secondary light: and if you did not (as Dr. Horsley conjectured with more credit to your reading than you deserved) borrow it from Daniel Zwicker, you caught it from one that "*stole*" it from him.

Who could this second-hand luminary be?— "*Guess*—say you to Dr. Horsley and the Reviewer—*guess again*." It was right in you to put your antagonists on the search; for it was not *your* business to make the discovery.

Shall I tell?——The *name* indeed is *Legion*; for *they are many*. But I will pass over several of them; such as *Christopher Sandius* and *John Le Clerc*, and come nearer home; because I know you are more at your ease with your own countrymen than you are among strangers.

F

There

There was a Tract published against the learned and venerable Bishop Bull (I am not ashamed to give him the same epithets that the wise and learned of every Communion have applied to this great man, though he may appear little in *your eye*) entitled *The Judgment of the Fathers concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity*: and another came out about the same time, and under the same patronage with this title, *The true and antient Faith, concerning the Divinity of our Lord asserted*.

ZWICKER was the sun around whose orb these planets moved; and you and your friends, have only followed their course as the *satellites* of the system.

I will inform you of the circumstance which led me to this discovery.—When I perused your *History of the Corruptions*, amidst a variety of groundless and unauthorized assertions I was particularly struck with one that I was unable to account for on any supposition that was either favourable to your integrity or your caution. I have not your history at hand, and therefore do not pretend to quote the exact words. The sense, however, was this, viz. “That Valesius, the “learned editor of Eusebius, had declared it to “be his opinion, that the orthodox had suppressed “the writings of Hegesippus, or suffered them “to perish through neglect, *because they were*
“ *judged*

"*judged to favour the Unitarian cause.*" I had a presentiment that this assertion was not true ; but to be thoroughly satisfied I turned to Valesius and carefully examined every passage where the name of Hegesippus occurs. The enquiry confirmed my conjecture ; and I now take the liberty of asserting in my turn, that the passage you refer to, exists no where in the notes of Valesius ; at least there is none that either says in direct terms, or even allowed you to infer by any *fair* consequence, that the writings of Hegesippus were *supposed to favour the Unitarian cause.* If such a passage *doth* really exist, produce it ; and shame the man who hath ventured to give you this open challenge.

It was this assertion of your's respecting Valesius, which led me at last to discover your *historical resources* among the *Socinian tracts* of the last century. The very same thing is asserted and almost (if I mistake not) in the same words, in *The judgment of the Fathers* : and repeated with some enlargement in *The true and antient Faith*. Now this is one of those truly *original* and *singular* thoughts that could only have occurred to *one* person, and must have been communicated before it could have been conceived by another. It hath no ground in fact ; and in the immense and trackless region of fancy and fiction, it is seldom that two persons meet by chance.

One discovery led to another, and I found at last that the Reviewer had only been contending with

—GHOSTS of *defunct bodies*—*

Your attempt to depreciate the abilities and learning of your Critic is at best a very suspicious circumstance, and will if it should succeed according to your wishes, only encrease the dishonour of your own defeat.

In the name of modesty, Dr. Priestley, do not write, nor encourage your retainers to write, as if it was a matter settled by universal suffrage that all the good sense in the world—all intellectual freedom—all truth, dignity, impartiality and liberality of sentiment were confined to you and them. Do not encrease the ridicule of Job's irony by taking to yourselves in earnest what he spoke to his friends with a sneer, "No doubt, but *ye* are the men, and wisdom shall die with *you*." No, Dr. Priestley! Wisdom is not so *short-lived*; nor doth she depend on such scanty and precarious means for support.

But wise as you are your wisdom hath not secured you against the most palpable inconsistency that folly herself could have been guilty of.

The *learning* which you affect to despise, and the *abilities* which you are so forward and eager to degrade, afforded you, by your own confes-

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* Hudibras.

sion, the principal motive which determined you to honour the original *animadversions* in the Review, with a distinct and particular REPLY, drawn out, as usual, into SECTIONS; charged with the common appendages of PREFACE and INTRODUCTION, and rounded with a CONCLUSION.

I will transcribe two passages from the Preface to that Reply: and by way of a countercharm, that the vanity of the Reviewer might not swell into wanton extravagance by the breath of your applause, I will produce a third from your postscript to Dr. Horsley.

“ My *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* “ being in my opinion, as well as that of my “ friends, of more value than most of my other “ publications, this piece of justice was thought “ to be due to it in preference to any of the rest; “ and the *knowledge* and *ability* of the present “ Reviewer, makes him a much more formidable “ and therefore a more respectable antagonist.”
[REPLY to the *Monthly Review*, Pref. p. iv.]

Again, p. vii. “ I do not charge this writer “ [the Reviewer] with a want of *learning* or *ability*. In these respects he may be much my “ superior.”

The Reviewer being (I suppose) of a stubborn make was not to be bent into compliances by such flattery as this. Compliments of this sort become indifferent when they grow familiar, and a man who

who doth not find them a novelty seldom esteems them a treasure.

But as the Reviewer was not to be bribed by your applause, you resolved to take your revenge on him by recalling it.

“ The idea I formed of his *learning* and *ability* is much lessened since the perusal of his last article and his Reply to my learned and judicious friend.” [Vide Letter to Dr. Horsley, p. 159.]

I now leave you amidst your other triumphs, to enjoy also the triumph of *Consistency*. As your merit is equal in all, the reward should be the same.

Much of your last pamphlet is too personal to be either entertaining or edifying to the public: and I will not follow your steps by going into a *bye-path*.

I will therefore take leave of you where you take leave of decorum and good manners; and in the true funeral style pay my last tribute to your obsequies.

The hint of your *Funeral* is your own; and though you spoke it in jest, yet (as a great writer† observes) “ *Death* is one of those few subjects that makes a wise man serious.” But some are born to mock what others have the decency to respect and fear.

† Dr. Johnson.

I shall leave it to your flatterers to sing your *requiem*: and if your “*learned and judicious friend*” should lead the *band*, I doubt not but the dirge will suit the occasion.

I am, &c.

May 20, 1784.

JUSTINOPHILUS.

P. S. How came Dr. Priestley to translate τὸν Ἰησοῦν αἰσέω* “*reverencing Jesus?*” Was there no design in this *equivocal* word, *reverence*? The “*WORSHIP*” of Christ was originally intended by the term αἰσέω, and the reducing it to the level of simple *reverence* or *respect* was a most flagrant perversion of the original meaning. This single example, well considered, might serve instead of a thousand to shew the *fidelity* of the HISTORIAN of the CORRUPTIONS.

* Compare *Remarks* on the Monthly Review, addressed to Mr. Badcock, p. 16, with Justin in *Dialogo cum Tryph.* p. 208. Edit. Thyrb.

F I N I S.

I shall leave it to your discretion to sing your
rejoice: and if your "learned and judicious
"rejoice" should be the same, I doubt not but
the dirge will suit the occasion.

I am, &c.

JUSTINOPHILUS.

Nov. 20, 1784.

P.S. How came Dr. Priestley to translate
the term "rejoice" as "rejoice"? Was there no
design in this equivocal word, "rejoice"? The
"worship" of Christ was originally intended by
the term "worship", and the reducing it to the level
of simple reverence or respect was a most flagrant
perversion of the original meaning. This flagrant
example, well considered, might serve instead of a
thousand to show the necessity of the historian of
the Corruptions.

* Compare Remarks on the Monthly Review, addressed
to Mr. Haddock, p. 10, which is in the same paper.
Nov. 20, 1784.

P. A. M. 1. 2.